1891

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THE CRISIS IN TURKEY.

By REV. JUDSON SMITH, D.D.,

FOREIGN SECRETARY.

[*A Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Board at Toledo, Ohio, October 7, 1896.*]

PUBLISHED BY THE BOARD,

1 SOMERSET STREET, BOSTON.

134319

THE CRISIS IN TURKEY.

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[*A Paper from the Prudential Committee, presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Board, at Toledo, Ohio, October 7, 1896.*]

WHEN at the death of Constantius, after Christianity had been the acknowledged religion of the Roman empire for nearly half a century, Julian ascended the throne and began to reopen the temples and to rekindle the altars of the ancient faith, it seemed for the time as if everything were lost. As the old ritual reappeared, and Christian worship retreated from view, and the whole weight of the influence and example of the court was more and more openly cast on the side of this reaction, men's hearts failed them and many were ready to abandon all. Amid this panic and despair Athanasius of Alexandria, with deeper insight, discerned the weakness and early collapse of Julian's movement, and said: "*Nebecula est, transibit*" — It is a little cloud, it will pass away. And the Persian campaign, and the dying emperor's cry, "Galilean, thou hast conquered," proved to be the death stroke to heathenism, the beginning of Christianity's unbroken sway in the Western world.

The events of the past year in Asiatic Turkey have brought us face to face with the greatest disaster which has ever yet befallen any mission of the Board. Indeed, the occasions are few in the whole history of Christianity, in earlier or later days, in which the powers of evil have dealt the Church more deadly blows. To a casual view it may seem that the results of all our seventy years in Turkey have gone down in the general crash, and that the only thing left for us to do is to withdraw from the field and count all as lost. But here, as in Julian's day, the deeper insight will reveal that though much is gone, yet all is not lost; that what remains has in it the seeds of a nobler, richer growth; that instead of the night of ruin and despair, this also is a little cloud, and will pass away. In the study which we propose we shall confine ourselves to Asiatic Turkey, to the three missions of the Board, within whose borders the carnival of robbery and bloodshed has been confined.

I. It was no accident which led the founders of the Board, when "the world was all before them where to choose," to turn an eager eye to the lands of the Bible, in the hope that soon a pure faith and worship might again bless those regions first visited by the gospel. It was the instinctive recognition of that charm which the Christian church of every land and age has found in these original seats of our faith, in the home of the Patriarchs, the chosen people, and of the world's Redeemer. And there is a deep justification of this feeling. This region of the earth is central, not by arbitrary choice, but by the nature of things. Here three great continents meet; hence go out the natural highways of travel and trade and imperial power. The faith that holds these regions is heir-presumptive to the religious throne of the world. And it was a divinely guided choice that led the American Board to send missionaries to Syria and Asia before the first decade of its history was closed. A new and hopeful element was thus cast into this problem of world history. The deepest and most characteristic forces of a nation, wholly separate from all political schemes, were thus set at work upon the solution of the Eastern question. The best contribution the world could give was brought to that solution, under circumstances that called out the least opposition.

It is a marvelous story, this planting of Christian missions in Asiatic Turkey. Their steady growth and wide expansion, against opposition of every sort, until they covered the land and drew under their influence the best elements of the nation, form one constant, varied, voluminous illustration of Divine Providence working in human affairs. From 1819, when Levi Parsons and Pliny Fiske broke the path to these fields,

to this day, the missions of the Board in Turkey have moved, as Moses and the host of Israel moved from Egypt to Sinai, and through the wilderness to Moab and the Jordan's banks, God's pillar of fire and of cloud going before, encamping behind, and everywhere giving security and light. Parsons and Fiske were sent out to Palestine; it was hoped that Jerusalem might be the sacred centre from which a purified gospel should once more go forth to bless the nations of the East and set the feet of many peoples in the way of peace. But this movement was premature; no foothold was yet to be gained among the Jews; and Smyrna and Beirut first, and later Constantinople, became the permanent centres of missionary effort. No one can now doubt that this also was of the Lord; that the centres of the Ottoman empire which then held sway over all the lands of three continents bordering on the eastern Mediterranean were wisely made the centres of the new life and faith from the West that were charged with an infinite blessing to all the peoples of that empire and of the Oriental world to which they stood as gateway and guard. A vaster problem than the fathers conceived was thus set before these missions, a problem whose full solution must involve the downfall of every false faith and the world-wide victory of the Cross. How many tongues are spoken here! How many peoples are brought together in this field! How far the streams of influence from this centre reach, to the east, to the west, to the north, to the south! Here gather unsolved problems of politics, of race, of morals, of faith. Here centres the Eastern Question, the Sphinx of History. And to this very point,

> "He who from zone to zone
> Guides through the boundless sky the certain flight"

of the fowls of the air, turned the missionary host, bound for Jerusalem, that it might throw its heavenly teaching and example into the midst of these forces and help to resolve all enigmas and heal all strifes. The call which came to Paul to leave the Jews and bear the gospel message to Asia and Greece and Rome was no more certain than this to Parsons and Fiske, to Goodell and Dwight and their associates, to undertake the work of the gospel at the capital and in all the cities of the Ottoman empire. A peculiar character has thus been stamped upon these missions from the first. Plans of great reach and slow fulfilment have been needful; special lines of work have been emphasized; preparations on a scale far outrunning the present dimensions of the work have been inaugurated; and an unusual quality of solidity and breadth attaches to the work in every form. The end is far to seek; and the sense of a vast and glorious task compensates the laborers for the long delay of victory, and gives them the heroic patience and the invincible hope of those who seek the city that has foundations.

Smyrna was entered in 1820; Constantinople, in 1831. From thence the work gradually reached out to Nicomedia and Brousa, to Aintab and Antioch, thence to Marsovan, Sivas, Trebizond, Erzroom, to Marash, Aleppo, Oorfa, Mardin, and Mosul, and still on to the adjacent regions of Persia. Cities, towns, villages, hamlets, and homes are reached in a steady widening of the field, until all Asiatic Turkey is covered with a network of stations and out-stations, of churches and schools, that bring the new impulse to well-nigh every home and heart in the non-Moslem population of the empire. The Moslem population soon became inaccessible, and has remained so to this day. Hence the aim of missionary effort has been to bring a pure gospel to the nominally Christian peoples, the Armenians, the Greeks, the Syrians, and through the internal reformation of these old churches to make ready for the time when the gospel could be freely preached to all nationalities. This original method of working was changed in 1846, when the persecuting edicts of the Armenian Patriarch forced the evangelicals out of the national church and community, and compelled them to organize Protestant churches and a Protestant community. This act, designed to destroy the evangelical cause, gave it a powerful impulse and secured for it imperial recognition and protection. It changed

the method but not the aim of the missionary work. The thorough awakening of the old churches and their adoption of a purer type of faith and morals have never been lost sight of; the organization of the Protestant body and its maintenance have been regarded as only temporary expedients, to be laid aside as soon as the great end could be better achieved in other ways.

The attitude of the Turkish government toward this evangelical movement has until recently been that of toleration and impartial protection. From the day of the downfall of Constantinople in 1453, Christians have lived under Moslem rule, protected in the enjoyment of certain recognized rights, among them the exercise of their religion. The subjects of friendly Christian powers have resided in the empire under the same general conditions. It was upon these conditions that the missionary work began, and has continued to this day. To these ancient privileges sanctioned by unvarying custom, treaty stipulations have been added, defining more clearly the rights and privileges conceded to the religious teachers of other nations, and guaranteeing to Christian missionaries, American as well as French and English, clear and ample protection in their legitimate work. The missionaries of the Board have lived in all good loyalty to the Turkish government from the first to this day, and they have enjoined this duty of loyalty upon their pupils and all who have come under their influence.

It is now seventy-seven years since the labors of the Board in Asiatic Turkey began. During that period about 700 missionaries, men and women, have rendered service in this field for a longer or shorter time, and the Board has expended upon this work at least $7,000,000. The present force is 176 missionaries, the annual expenditure is about $175,000, and the valuation of the mission plant is nearly $1,500,000.

The native agency, coöperating with the missionaries and giving a vast extension to the scope of their labors, has grown from fifty-seven native preachers and helpers, reported fifty years ago, to a force of 878 native laborers, of whom 100 are pastors of churches, 128 others are preachers, and 564 are teachers in mission schools of all grades, from the kindergarten and day school up to the college and theological seminary. In these fields there are now 125 churches with 12,787 members, 327 places for stated preaching, with average congregations exceeding 34,000. There were 20,496 persons under instruction last year, of whom 2,576 were in the higher schools and colleges. Three colleges for young men and three for young women, planted at convenient centres, are preparing a noble company of students for positions of influence and power. But to measure the actual results of the evangelical movement we must go beyond all such statistics and note the leaven which has entered so many of the old churches and communities from these mission churches and from the schools connected with them, and from the life and enterprise which are nourished within them. We must bear in mind the place held in their several communities by the members of these churches, the important part they bear in the prosperity and enterprise of the times.

Literary work has held a prominent place in the activities of these missions. Translations of the Scriptures into the various languages spoken in the empire were promptly begun and earnestly pressed; the ablest men of the missions have devoted themselves to this effort, and the record of results is most rich and impressive. No considerable part of the population of the whole empire but can read in its own tongue the wonderful works of God. Helps to the understanding of the Bible have also been provided in a systematic way and on a large scale, and a good beginning has been made in providing a Christian literature for the edification of the community. In no mission of the Board is there such an ample literary apparatus for every department of missionary work, and the use of this literature is widely diffused. There is a great body of readers, and there is a great demand for these products of the press. The annual circulation of the Scriptures in these fields reaches 50,000 copies.

It may help us to realize the progress made by these missions if we take a rapid

survey of the facts already given. Set churches and chapels at the strategic points in every considerable district, under the care of native preachers and pastors; surround them with schools of all grades, according to the needs of each place, from the day school and kindergarten through high school for boys, and boarding school for girls, up to the college and theological seminary, under the care of native teachers of both sexes, assisted in the higher grades by missionary men and women; let the Bible in every language of the country be circulated freely, accompanied by all the modern aids for its clear explanation; and let the religious press, in the vernacular, bring its weekly tidings and instruction into hundreds of households, — and in this brief epitome we shall to some extent apprehend how thoroughly the influence of evangelical truth and life has come to penetrate and inspire the people among whom the missionaries have wrought.

Then carry this state of things, with allowance for local differences, out over every district and province of Asiatic Turkey, from the Bosphorus to the Russian and Persian frontier, from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and we have in brief a view of the progress made and the state of missionary work in the Turkish empire up to the most recent times. It is a widely diffused, effectively organized, powerfully manned, and successful enterprise, challenging the respect and admiration of all intelligent observers. If the expenditures upon this field have been great, amounting to more than one fourth of the Board's annual budget; if the force employed upon it has been exceptionally large and able, counting more than one fourth of the total number under commission; if the mission plant is unusually varied and valuable; in a word, if the stake of the Board in these fields is great, the results are also great, and the success most striking. The final end in view is, indeed, still far away, but that is simply because that aim is so majestic, and the ultimate issues so far-reaching as to be almost identical with the universal triumph of Christianity in the earth. For investment and time and force employed, it is doubtful if the Board has anywhere achieved a more substantial success, or has made a greater contribution to the solution of all missionary problems, than that which has marked these missions in the Turkish empire. The strongest intellectual, moral, and religious forces in the empire are to be found in the evangelical communities; great prosperity and business thrift are also there. And the movement strengthens with every year. Beyond all the limits that are recognized in statistics, along lines scarcely indicated there, in ways that are *felt* rather than counted and seen, the leaven of this nobler life and worship is penetrating the whole mass of the nominally Christian populations, and insensibly affecting the spirit and sentiments of multitudes of the ruling people.

II. Upon this work, so placed, so administered, full of such present fruits and bright with such radiant promise, almost without warning, the terrible storm of massacre and pillage and outrage fell in the closing months of last year, and thrilled the hearts of all nations with horror, and left in its wake an awful scene of death and misery, of dread and despair. The rapidity of its movement, the places where it fell, the nationality of its victims, the method of the fell work, are striking and significant. The massacre in Constantinople, September 30, 1895, was the prelude. The affair at Trebizond, October 8, with its thousand slain in a day, showed what was coming and where it would strike. Then followed in quick succession the bloody scenes at Bitlis, October 25, at Erzroom and Erzingan, October 30; Sivas is struck November 12; Harpoot and all its villages, November 11, Marsovan, November 15; Aintab, November 16; Marash, November 18; and the holocaust at Oorfa, with its thousands of victims, December 28, closes the first act in this destruction of a nation.

The Armenians, among whom the most of this work has been wrought, were the only people assailed. In the short space of a few weeks, from being the most prosperous people in the empire, they became the poorest and most wretched. The leading

men of the nation in many communities were struck down in cold blood by the ten thousand, their possessions carried off by their murderers, and their wives and children, homeless and destitute, thrown upon the charities of the world. Great numbers of other men were robbed, imprisoned, or driven into hiding. In some regions the alternative of Islam or death was offered to whole villages and towns, and those who through fear denied their faith were rigorously forced to go to the mosques. Multitudes of women and children were carried away to the harems of those who had robbed their homes and murdered their husbands and fathers, there to forget their own faith and people. This did not happen in one village or city alone, not in one district or province of the empire merely; the six eastern provinces, including the territory occupied by the Eastern Turkey Mission and Trebizond, were swept from north to south, from east to west, in cities, in towns, in hamlets, with this fearful storm of murder and greed and lust; the province of Aleppo, including the whole territory of our Central Turkey Mission, suffered nearly the same fate; and the visitation reached Cesarea and Marsovan and their villages. In all this vast region business and agriculture and every form of productive industry were silenced; the winter's supply of food, the very implements of labor, were destroyed, and the victims left paralyzed and hopeless.

When it is remembered that this calamity was not the result of war, but that it fell upon peaceful communities, occupied with customary pursuits, unarmed, defenceless, unresisting, that often the neighbors joined with the lawless ruffians that led the assault in robbery and bloodshed, that in not a few cases the soldiers to whom the assailed looked for protection not only offered no resistance to outrage but even joined in the violence, and that in scarcely a single instance have these wrongdoers suffered for their evil deeds,— with these facts in mind, it will be plain to all that this was no ordinary disaster, but ranks with the deeds that cover the names of Nero and Decius and Diocletian with everlasting infamy; with those that make the Inquisition, the reign of Mary Tudor, and that of Philip II of Spain, hateful in the eyes of the Christian world.

The Christian work which stood in the midst of the fields, thus swept with destruction, has suffered a fearful shock. Churches and chapels and schools have gone down in the general wreck; pastors, preachers, teachers, leading men and women in many a church, have been beggared and outlawed, or have been slain outright. Not a few have won the martyr's crown; "and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; and others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." The blow has been heavier and more wasting here, lighter and more guarded there; but everywhere it has brought measureless loss and sorrow and dread.

The missionaries, men and women, without an exception, have remained at their posts, have shared the perils of their people; at Harpoot were stripped of their goods and driven from their burning homes; at Bitlis were virtually imprisoned in their homes and cut off from their associates; but in all places have opened their homes, their hearts, their possessions for the comfort and relief of the people. Thousands of lives have been saved by their efforts, hundreds of thousands have freely received the relief from Christian lands, administered by their hands. They have been angels of mercy, towers of defence, the solitary support of the fearful and despairing. The sense of measureless gratitude in many hearts was expressed by one in Constantinople, who when it was said that the ministry of relief was too great to be continued replied: "Don't say that; we have nothing left to us now but the missionaries and God;" by another in Oorfa, who said: "I don't know how we could have endured the pressure but for Miss Shattuck; I think we should all have turned Moslem." They voiced the speechless misery that filled the land, and gave tongue to the mute appeal of the homeless, broken-hearted, naked, and destitute women and children who by the hundred thousand had nowhere else to look for help. And their hands administered the relief that came

flowing in from Europe and America, and so wisely guided it that it brought tenfold blessing and help. No words can measure the burdens and sorrows and strain to mind and heart that have rested upon those men and women at the front during these twelve months. No pen can describe the blessing they have been to this stricken nation, the comfort and hope and peace their very presence has given. The moral impression which their fidelity and patience and love have made far outruns the fruits of many years of ordinary service; and it has reached beyond the suffering people, it has won the admiration o many of the ruling nations, and has touched the heart of the civilized world. Never for a moment have they despaired of the work, though it seemed to lie in ruins about them. While their burning homes were still smoking they have appealed for means with which to enlarge the work. This storm has seemed to them but the prelude to a vast expansion of their opportunity. They have looked beyond these clouds and have seen the whole Armenian nation awaiting their message, the way of access open to all the people of the land; and they have rejoiced to see this day.

III. It becomes a most solemn question, what are we to do with our missions in Asiatic Turkey? How are we to interpret these stirring events for the past year? Are we to count our work there ruined, its further prosecution hopeless, and are we to begin the retreat? Or are we to deem these events a challenge to our faith, a summons to new efforts and greater deeds? There are voices that call in each direction; which shall we follow? If we can hear the voice of Him who called us to this field in the beginning, who has made our way there to prosper, in whose honor so many, in city and town, these twelve months past, have joyfully laid down their lives, if we can hear his voice and learn his will, our path will be plain. In a work like this it can never be safe to desert his standard, even though it lead right onward into the darkness and the storm. We are sworn to a more sacred service than that band whose deeds the poet's verse has made immortal: —

> "Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs but to do and die."

1. In the first place the presumption from the course of Christian history lies against our retreat. This is by no means the first time in Christian annals when progress has been suddenly checked, and the labor of long years brought to seeming ruin. How many times in the centuries of persecution did it seem as though all were lost! Nero delivered the Church a staggering blow; Decius seemed to have annihilated it. Diocletian filled all Eastern Christendom with bloodshed and fire and destruction. But the church that bled in witness for Christ was the church that grew. It was stronger when Decius' bloody work was done than it was when he began. Diocletian's fury ceased, not because the Church was perishing, but because his own throne was tottering to its fall. The Netherlands grew strong and compact beneath the blows of Philip which were meant to destroy them. The fires at Smithfield weaned the whole English nation from the bloody queen who kindled them. The death of Bishop Hannington gave a greater impulse to the Christian cause at Uganda than years of his life could have done. When the pagan reaction was filling Madagascar with martyrs and closing its churches it was the time, not for the abandonment of the work, but for its renewal and more vigorous prosecution.

2. We have too great a stake in this work to desert it now. These seventy years of continuous effort in this field; these seven hundred men and women who have spent life and strength and hopes and prayers upon its founding and growth; these seven millions of dollars that have gone into the effort to plant the gospel afresh in these scenes of its early victories,— these, one and all, pledge us to stand by the work until we win the day. But these are not all. Into this enterprise have entered the love and

faith and oyalty of our churches, the prayers and hopes and longings of three generations of Christian men and women in this and other lands, the sacred, implicit promise that we would press the work, and supply the workmen, and stand by the effort, until our Lord should come to his own. We cannot leave this work, or suffer it to languish, without a fatal betrayal of our trust. If it had been folly in the weary autumn of 1864 to give up the struggle for the Union and acknowledge the war a failure, when six months more would win the victory, it were more than weakness for us to turn back now, after such labors and cost, and forfeit all, together with our self-respect, when a few brief years of further toil and gifts and devotion will carry the day.

3. To withdraw now would be to lose a great opportunity. The calamities of the past year have changed many things. The pressure of a common distress has brought Protestants and Gregorians into closer relationships of sympathy and suffering. They have worshiped in the same churches, have met in the same prayer-meetings, have listened now to the Protestant preacher or the missionary, and now to the Gregorian priest. Through large portions of the country this practical unification of the nation is going on. And along with this is the deepened religious feeling that pervades the people. Crushed, humbled, with no help but in God, there is a wide and unwonted turning of heart to the gospel and its great consolations. A new sense of eternal realities, of the privileges of discipleship, of the hopes and joys of the Christian faith, has been awakened throughout the whole land. When Dr. Fuller, at Aintab, is invited to preach in the Gregorian church and is greeted by a congregation of more than three thousand, filling every foot of space; when four hundred Gregorian women at Oorfa gather regularly in a prayer-meeting led by Miss Shattuck, and these scenes are repeated in Harpoot, Erzroom, Sivas, and in scores of places in all these fields, we have come to a new phase of our missionary work. Nothing like it has been seen in these fields since our work began. With the whole Protestant community quickened and chastened, with the Gregorians thus accessible and waiting, it were little short of a crime not to press our opportunity, and gather in the ripened harvest. Long years we have toiled and prayed and waited to see this day; it is the time, not for delay or retreat, but for vigorous advance.

4. We must not forfeit the power of the martyr church. Something has been done in these churches during the past year which lays a powerful claim upon our sympathy and support. For the name of Christ many have met death without dismay; men and women, who could have saved their lives by denying their Lord, have joyfully chosen him at the sword's point, at the musket's mouth. Gathering now in rags from ruined homes, and worshiping in dismantled churches, they wear a glory that time cannot obscure. If it were ever possible for the American churches to retire from these fields, we cannot think of it now, when every heart in the civilized world thrills with admiration of their deeds. Those churches must be sustained at any cost. We should be giving aid to those beneath whose swords their dead have fallen, were we to fail them in this extremity. Here is the precious fruit of all our Christian labor and example; these are the heroes we have helped to make. Mardiros of Arabkir, Garabed of Sivas, Krikor of Harpoot, Sarkis of Choonkoosh, Hagop of Oorfa, and the sixteen other Protestant pastors and preachers who died for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God,—

"When can their glory fade?"

The mighty power that is in such witness to Jesus Christ we must cherish and help to make triumphant in every heart, in every land.

5. We must give great weight to the judgment of the missionaries. They stand at the front. They have faced the danger. They have walked in the valley of the shadow of death. They have felt the power of the gates of hell. They know, better than all

besides, what has been lost and what still remains. Perils hang about them still, subtle, impalpable, persistent; no man can tell what a day may bring forth. But they abide in peace, with no thought of fear or retreat. And to a man they urge us to maintain our work and seize the glorious opportunity that lies before us. From the midst of the flames and ruin they have given thanks to God that they have lived to see this day and have begged us not to recall them. With the vision of faith they have looked beyond this day of fear and desolation, and have seen the kingdom of God coming in power among the people of every name and nation there. Like the veteran columns of the Iron Duke at Waterloo, they have felt their cause invincible, the forces before them yielding, and have refused to retreat. And the whole Christian world admires their heroism, and applauds their deeds. It were a shame to recall such men. It were ignominy to give them faint support. It were high treason to the Lord of heaven to desert them. In God's marvelous providence they have gained in this one short year advantages which would have richly repaid the labors and costs of a score of years. And it is for us, with deepest gratitude and unfaltering devotion, to stand by them in this crisis and culmination of our work; to fill their wasted ranks, to increase our gifts, and make ready for the final victory. We honor the great men and women who have wrought in these fields in former years, and praise their deeds; the Goodells and Dwights, the Hamlins and Schaufflers, the Riggses and Parsons and Blisses, the Schneiders and Smiths; and we do well. But their peers, many of them their own sons and daughters, are on those self-same fields to-day, and the deeds of the fathers they have done, and greater deeds than these have they done. And the churches of America will never unsay those former praises or let the heroism of these days be unhonored or in vain. We have put the name of Lincoln by the side of the name of Washington; the praises of Bunker Hill and Trenton and Yorktown have not obscured the glory of Vicksburg and Gettysburg and Appomattox. And the appeal of these heroic bands who have come through the smoke of conflict, and who urge us to stand by them and their work to the end, will have an eloquence and weight which none can resist.

6. Finally, let us inquire what is the will of the Lord. This is the decisive question for every Christian heart. We went to Turkey at the beginning in obedience to his command; his presence and blessing have not failed us at any point during the long years since that day. The missionaries now in the field have felt his presence and been cheered by his smile through all these days of blood and ruin and sorrow. He has stood by those who have met death for his sake, as he stood by Stephen in his agony and as he made Polycarp's dying hours full of peace.

The ruin which lawless power has wrought is no proof that he has deserted his field. This is not the first time in the history of his church when his people have suffered persecution and death in his cause. If he is testing the evangelical churches of Asia Minor, he is also testing the churches of America which sustain this work. They do not faint or despair. Our representatives there do not falter or give up the cause. Can it be that he calls *us* now to set the example of faint-heartedness and fear? What do our love and loyalty to Christ mean, if when he points to these lands of want and weakness, and bids us save them, and leads the way, we falter and turn away? Could the name of Christian ever be redeemed from the shame of such betrayal? Could the cause of missions ever recover from such a fatal wound? We praise the martyrs and Christian heroes of every age. Are these words only; or are they the instinctive homage of the heart? Heber's prayer should be ours: —

> "They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
> Through peril, toil, and pain!
> O God, to us may grace be given
> To follow in their train."

What if the work be difficult! What if it involve great labor, many hardships, great cost, and frequent losses! The end is worth all it costs. Nothing can be so disastrous as for us to refuse God's call. What could bring to our churches a richer blessing, or so refine and elevate their spiritual life, as to stand by this beleaguered cause with their love and gifts through storm and night, until the day dawns! It is not these widowed mothers, these orphaned children, these dismantled churches, this stricken people, or even our missionaries, one with them in suffering and hope, it is not merely these who await our choice. He, too, whose name we bear, who stands in their midst, one with them in suffering and boundless love, he, too, awaits our choice. In the day of awards, when our lives are finished and our work is done, and we face again these pleading souls and behold the face of him, their Judge and ours, his word to the faithful will be, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."